

Name _____
Traits of Writing- Voice and Sentence Fluency

Date _____
Excerpt from *Out of the Dust* by Karen Hesse

March 1934
Fields of Flashing Light

I heard the wind rise,
and stumbled from my bed,
down the stairs,
out the front door,
into the yard.
The night sky kept flashing,
lightning danced down on its spindly legs.
I sensed it before I knew it was coming.
I heard it,
smelled it,
tasted it.
Dust.
While Ma and Daddy slept,
the dust came,
tearing up fields where the winter wheat,
set for harvest in June,
stood helpless.
I watched the plants,
surviving after so much drought and so much wind,
I watched them fry,
or
flatten,
or
blow away,
like bits of cast-off rags.
It wasn't until the dust turned toward the house,
like a fired locomotive,
and I fled,
barefoot and breathless, back inside,
it wasn't until the dust
hissed against the windows,
until it ratcheted the roof,
that Daddy woke.
He ran into the storm,
his overalls half-hooked over his union suit.
"Daddy!" I called. "You can't stop dust."
Ma told me to
cover the beds,
push the scatter rugs against the doors,
dampen the rags around the windows.
Wiping dust out of everything,
she made coffee and biscuits,
waiting for Daddy to come in.
Sometime after four,
rubbing low on her back,

Ma sank down into a chair at the kitchen table
and covered her face.
Daddy didn't come back for hours,
not
until the temperature dropped so low,
it brought snow.
Ma and I sighed, grateful,
staring out at the dirty flakes,
but our relief didn't last.
The wind snatched that snow right off the fields,
leaving behind a sea of dust,
waves and
waves and
waves of
dust,
rippling across our yard.
Daddy came in,
he sat across from Ma and blew his nose.
Mud streamed out.
He coughed and spit out
mud.
If he had cried,
his tears would have been mud too,
but he didn't cry.
And neither did Ma.

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1. What is this passage about?
 2. Put hearts next to writing that you liked.
 3. Underline alliteration
 4. Circle repetition for effect
 5. Bracket parallel patterns
 6. Put stars next to figurative language
 7. Highlight the imagery that impacted you the most.
 8. On the back of this paper, in less than 270 words, describe a time of **destruction** from **your point of view**. Use the writing strategies seen in this excerpt in your own writing. Don't worry about punctuation right now; just let it out.